

## JOIN THE BATTLE! Philippians 3:17-19

### INTRODUCTION

Thanks Chris for preaching when I was traveling. Providentially, on Mother's Day and Father's Day. So I missed the annual "Lift up Mom and Beat Down Dad" 😊

I recently read an article that included the following: "The Bible just got an emoji makeover. The Bible is the most translated book in the world, but the latest translation is an attempt to appeal to the millennial faithful. A group of devout Christians has created an app (*what else?*) that translates the [Bible] into emoticons and emoji."

"Scripture for Millennials" is available on Apple's App Store. The creators say they created the translation program to draw new readers to the word of God.

Here is a quote from one of the creators of this app: "What's amazing about emojis, and what's made them so successful, is they're language-agnostic – they allow you to convey an idea to anyone, regardless of what language they speak," one of the creators, who is known only as the "sunglasses smiley emoji," said to the religious news site. A major goal of this whole process was to take a book that I think is very non-approachable to lay readers and try to make it more approachable by removing a lot of its density."

That is such a sad statement. I don't think I would want to be handcuffed to those folks when they die.

It is a reminder that there is a battle underway.  
There is a battle against enemies on the outside.  
And a battle against error on the inside.

**READ Phil 3:17-4:1**

**Proposition:**

**I. Follow – v. 17**

**II. Fight – vv. 18-19**

**So That:** You and I will join the battle.

**I. Follow 3:17**

Point – Imitation

I was talking to one of the faithful brothers this morning before service and we were discussing how mature Christians have no problem with the fundamentals of the faith, the great doctrines of grace contained in Scripture. Even a mature Christian approaches with an understanding that we haven't arrived at the goal yet, we are pursuing the goal this side of glory.

**Al Martin** – *“Love in the heart towards Christ is always thirsting to know more of the mind and the will of Christ in order that one may more certainly please Christ in his walk.”*

Proof –

“<sup>17</sup>**Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.**”

“**Brethren**” – An affectionate term. A distinguishing term.

- Identifies the audience to whom Paul is speaking.
- If you are not a Christian, this does not apply to you.
- The point being, you cannot be saved by following his example.

This exhortation is for those who are already saved ...

“**join in following my example**” – συμμιμητής – hapax

- literally means – “Become my fellow imitators, brothers”

This concept of imitation is not new to Scripture:

**Eph 5:1** – “be imitators of God, as beloved children;”

**1 Pet 2:21** – “Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,”

Some people say, “I don’t follow men. I only follow God. I only follow Christ.” Well, you seem to have a problem with the Word of God then.

**1 Cor 11:1** – “Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.”

Now, it is important to understand that Paul does NOT say mimic my gifts. He does NOT say mimic my calling. He does NOT say mimic my achievements. What he says is join in following my example.

And not just himself, Paul continues in v. 17...

“**and observe**” – keep a watchful eye on, notice carefully, be concerned about, keep thinking about

- he is talking about a diligent, intent, penetrating, examining gaze

**Rom 16:17** – “Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.”

**Luke 11:35** – “watch out that the light in you may not be darkness.”

**Phil 2:4** – “do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”

Whom?? The behavior....the blueprint....

“**those who walk according to the pattern you have in us**” –

### **The Behavior:**

What characterizes a godly man/woman?

He is a follower of Christ.

He is on the narrow path.

He follows the Way of Salvation

This follows a long list of godly men ...

Enoch – “walked with God”

Noah – “was a righteous man” “blameless”

Abram – “walk before Me!” “be blameless!”

Job – “blameless,” “upright,” “fearing God,” “turning away from evil”

Levi – “walked with Me in peace and uprightness”

Turn to:

**Col 1:10** (object of Paul’s prayer)

**Col 2:6** (exhortation)

**Col 3:7** (reminder of past)

**Col 4:5** (evangelism)

**Eph 4:1** - “I...entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called”

**1 John 2:6** – “The one who says he abides in Him, ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked”

The context here in our text....**Christ, Paul, Timothy, Epaphroditus**, ... pastor, elders, overseers, shepherds, deacons, Titus 2 women, the godly men and women around you!

Beloved, I follow John MacArthur, James Montgomery Boice, Ligon Duncan, George Lawson, Robb Provost, Gary Bloomquist, Tim Peelen, Scott Malm, Mike Frazey.

**The Blueprint:**

**“according to the pattern you have in us”**

Truth in Christ is Truth indeed.

Truth in doctrine is demonstrated by Truth in deed.

God is commanding → Know the great Doctrines of Grace by which you were saved and find those men and women who exemplify these truths in their lives ... and follow them!

**Application – Proverbs** – One theme that runs through the entire Book of Proverbs is to select your companions wisely

- **1:10-19; 2:11f; 4:10f; 13:20;**

**Application** – **1 Tim 4:12** – “Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but *rather* in speech, conduct, love, faith *and* purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.”

**Tit 2:7** – “in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, *with* purity in doctrine, dignified,”

Note the inseparable connection between doctrine and deeds.

## **II. Fight 3:18-19**

Point – Paul moves from exhortation to admonition; he moves from imitation to fortification → protection and strengthening that we need understanding that there is a battle underway.

**Geoff Thomas** – “*I am alarmed when I hear one nervous refrain in certain inter-church prayer meetings: ‘Keep us united Lord.’ I want to ask the person praying that prayer, ‘United in what?’*”

*The Gerasene swine were all united as they went over the top of the cliff. Every cult has an image of total uniformity ... Keep us Christians united in what? What morality? What theology? What are those prayers going on about? ‘Let us be allowed to go on holding to our muddled ideas in peace, with no one challenging us for perhaps being mistaken.’”*

Now watch this ... pastor Thomas continues,

*“Paul did not want the Judaizers in Galatia to remain united to that poor church like a leech, debilitating that congregation and taking glory from Christ.”*

Proof – “<sup>18</sup>**For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping,**”

There is a battle to be fought!

**“For many walk”** – Paul is the type.

These men of whom he is now going to speak are the antitype.

The focus here is not on their false teaching.

The focus is on their behavior, their lifestyle.

Remember Christ said “You will know them by their fruits.”

Paul is **“weeping”** because he longs for:

the preservation of the saints and the conversion of the sinners.

**Hendriksen** – “Truly Paul’s weeping when he writes about the enemies of the cross of Christ is as glorious as is the *joy, joy, joy* that sings its way through this marvelous epistle!”

This is the same language and the same passion of the heart as Paul’s instruction to the Ephesian Elders ...

**Acts 20:29-31** – “I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; <sup>30</sup>and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. <sup>31</sup>Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.”

**“that they are enemies of the cross of Christ”** – literally **“the enemies of the cross of Christ”** → great contrast! Paul and those who walk according to the pattern and then the great contrast of the enemies of the cross of Christ.

Who are these specifically? Are they the previous Judaizers? Others? Incipient Gnostics? Some other antinomian libertines? Were these specifically people who had professed faith in Christ, but deserted and left? Mere outsiders? Beloved, we don’t really know for sure.

Now, if these are still the Judaizers, this makes perfect sense → unregenerate people cannot govern their behavior.

**Illustration** – The vicious Isis savage who massacred Orlando night club, he himself struggled with the sin of homosexuality.

**Illustration** – Roman Catholic priests with their perversion/pedophilia.

Wide variety of views by commentators. → perhaps we are not supposed to understand a precise group. General warning.

We can't say for sure who these people were – may be Judaizers or Antinomians inside the church, may be outside the church – BUT ... what we can say for sure is there is a proximity of danger.

**Their Destiny:**

“<sup>19a</sup>**whose end is destruction**” – 1:28 – ἀπώλεια  
→ they are on the Road of Ruin

Contrast this with the goal of Paul in “<sup>14a</sup>I press on toward the **goal**” – athletic word for the finish line, the mark.

“<sup>14b</sup>for the **prize** of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

- the “**prize**” is eternal fellowship with Christ

**Their Description:**

“<sup>19b</sup>**whose god is *their* appetite, and *whose* glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things.**”

When you look at fast teachers described in the Bible, they always exhibit a love for all of, or some of, or at least one of three things → girls, greed, or glory.

“**whose god is *their* appetite**” – literally means ‘belly, stomach’

“**and *whose* glory is in their shame**” – seems to be a quote from **Hos 4:7** – “The more they multiplied, the more they sinned against Me; I will change their glory into shame.”

What is interesting is that God tells us the reason for the result in the previous verse:

**Hos 4:6** – “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.”

→ Opposite of “**observ(ing) those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.**”!!!

In the book of Hosea, they have forgotten the pattern.

**Illustration** – The story of a mother speaking to her young son: “There! You have a black eye, and your nose is bruised, and your coat is torn to bits,” said Mamma, as her youngest appeared at the door. “How many times have I told you not to play with that bad Jenkins boy?” “Mamma,” said Bobby, “do I look like we’ve been playing?” ☺

**Application** – Beloved, there is a battle and a fight. Spiritually speaking, we are going to get bruised. But God wants us to engage. He wants us to understand that there is peace and blessings upon blessings right here and right now.

There is one more description in our text:

“**who set their minds on earthly things**” – means to ‘think’

• Contrast → 1:7; 2:2, 5; 3:15; 4:2, 10

“**on earthly things**” – For the unbeliever, gold is their god.

For the believer, God is their gold.

→ Don’t treasure the gift more than the giver.

**Duncan** – “85% of the things that are on the best-seller list...I’m not talking about *The New York Times* best-seller list, I’m talking about the *Christian Book Distributors* retailers’ list of the top 100 Christian books... 85% of these are giving you this message: God can get you what you want better than anybody else. “Use God to get the world.” That’s the message. *God can get you your best life now. God can get you everything...He can get it for you better and faster than*

*anybody else. In other words, what is being promoted on Christian television and in Christian books — “Use the Lord to get the world.”*

→ This makes the Christian captive to a lesser joy.

**Application** – Paul is saying the same thing he said to the church in Colossae, **Col 3:2** – “Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.”

**Phil 4:8** – “Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things.”

**Point** - The thoughts of heaven that are to fill the believer’s mind can ONLY come from Scripture. The Bible is the only reliable source of knowledge of the things of heaven.

**Illustration** – Do you remember the sad death of JFK Junior. He was a licensed pilot but he wasn’t licensed to fly by instrumentation only. He was flying by instrument ... and flew his plane right into the ocean.

**Illustration** – A co-worker and friend of mine who is a pilot told me that when he was being trained, they placed a tent over him so all he could see were the instruments. He describes how, while training, every fiber of his being was telling him the plane has hurtling towards the ground. But the instructor kept saying, “Trust the instruments.”

**Application** – In the same way, trust the Word of God to navigate your life through the zero visibility storms of life.

- Find an instructor.
- Engage in discipleship.

Beloved, there are examples to follow. And there are battles to be fought.

## CONCLUSION

**Thomas Paine** – a Founding Father of America - *“Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom, must, like men, undergo the fatigues of supporting it.”* He, of course, was talking about earthly freedom.

On the spiritual side, there is a battle, there are fatigues. When you engage in this battle and serve, the blessings come, the discipleship comes, the encouragement comes. God gets greater glory. You get more joy and satisfaction. And those around you that don't know Christ will see a changed you. You will be better armed and equipped as you have sanctified Christ first in your hearts, to give these loved ones a reason and a hope for that which lies within you.